

Le déchainé

Le Grand Tour | Thursday August 8, 2024

The warriors

By Jonathan B. Roy

At the Grand Tour, the baggage you carry isn't just the one you drop off in the trucks.

Anne-Lucie fell on the first day and has been sporting a large bandage on her elbow ever since. "It's bloody and bruised, but it hasn't stopped me from riding!"

Another rode with a fractured left wrist, sustained just before the start of the tour. But I really wanted to come!" she shared, laughing. I took my gravel bike: with a single chainring at the front, I only need my right hand to change gears."

I also give the title of warriors to the dozens of volunteers, mechanics, caterers and massage therapists for whom the day starts early and goes on very late.

Sylvie was a world-class 100-meter hurdler 40 years ago. She is now involved in many sporting events, winter and summer alike. "I received so much from volunteers when I was an athlete that I now take the time to give back."

The marshalls are divided into three dozens who start their routes at different times. Half their day is spent in the sun (or rain) ensuring road safety at intersections, or dealing with mechanical breakdowns and accidents. Dinner is already well under way when the last of them enter the village.

Yohanna won't be riding today. Her cancer surgery was scheduled for this morning. "I wish it had been a day later," shared the woman who pedaled right up to the last minute. This cancer is making me miss the last day of the Grand Tour..."

Halfway through the tour, I sat next to

Antoine at the water's edge, 2 km from the finish. Wearing a T-shirt and sandals, he admits he rarely pedals. "But this week is very special for us," he explains.

There are five of them in green and blue shirts: Jean Quirion, his wife Lyne, his sister



Marie, his daughter Flavie, and Antoine, his son-in-law. Two years ago, Jean was diagnosed with brain cancer, with a life expectancy of three months. Back-breaking treatments - followed by tough rehabilitation - gave that prognosis a reprieve. "But there's no cure," says Jean, with whom I had the pleasure of sharing a meal. "I'm doomed," he adds softly.



Sunny
25°C - feels 29°C

The former university lecturer isn't 60 years old, and he exudes kindness. He managed to get back on a bike just a few months ago, yet a natural gesture for one who has been riding all his life. "Being at the Grand Tour this year, with my family, is a gift I never expected. I've enjoyed every minute of it." His family too, judging by their eyes wet with compassion.

Knowing that he would never know his future grandchildren, Jean Quirion wrote six illustrated books for them: "Les Aventures des Petits-Zamours". Each book presents a theme in its own wonderful way: family, friends, cycling. The latest, entitled "Grand-Papou aime", brings together in a picture book everything that has brought Jean happiness in his life. This album and two others will be launched in September, with all proceeds going to the Fondation Santé Gatineau. The books and more information can be found at

<https://www.leslibraires.ca/editeur/jean-quirion-15942>

<https://fondationsantegatineau.ca/albums/>

A sincere thank you for sharing your stories this week. I invite you to follow my African bicycle journey via jonathan-broy.com/nouvelles, and I look forward to seeing you all again next year.

Photo caption: Jean Quirion



PRÉSENTE

GRAND TOUR

Read the Déchainé online
veloquebecvoyages.com/en/dechainé/





On the road

Regular route (83 km)

The final regular route of this Grand Tour will offer one last reminder of the region's natural beauty, as you ride along the Ottawa River in the morning, first into Ontario towards Lefaivre, and then on to L'Original, before heading back into the Ontarian countryside from the lunch stop at Vankleek Hill. In the afternoon, we visit the small villages of the area before arriving in Plantagenet to celebrate the achievements of this wonderful week spent together. **Rest stop** : at km 14 in Lefaivre and at km 69, in Fournier.

Lunch stop, km 45, Vankleek Hill

For lunch, head to the heart of the

beautiful village of Vankleek Hill, to the Vankleek Hill Fair, where you can enjoy a leisurely meal before hitting the road for the last afternoon of your Grand Tour! Taste the cheese of the day, courtesy of **Fromages d'ici**: Cheese curds (Fromagerie Victoria).

Shortcut (33 km)

Whether your legs are heavy, or you've scheduled a dinner for tonight, today's shortcut will get you back to Plantagenet in a flash, on a beautiful route that takes in both sides of the Ottawa River.

Option 1 (+19 km)

In the morning, work up an appetite with this optional 19 km exploration of the small

village of Caledonia Springs.

Option 2 (+33 km)

Wish this Grand Tour never ended? Well... that's not possible, but you can always extend your cycling afternoon with this second optional route of the day, which will take you a little further into the Southern Ontario countryside. You'll pass through the villages of Saint-Bernardin, Dunvegan, Maxville and Saint-Isidore, before rejoining the regular route at the Fournier rest stop.



At the finish line in Plantagenet

Pierre and Lyne - 37 years of shared happiness today

Those who ride together, stay together! Happy 37th wedding anniversary to Lyne and Pierre!

Escape Café

A good cup of coffee before you hit the road is a great way to start the day! The Escape Café truck will be open between 6:30 and 10 a.m. in Papineauville village to serve you the caffeinated beverage of your choice.

Lost & found

Have you lost any items during your Grand Tour? Come and see us at the Info booth at the finish! We've got a number of items looking for their owners, including: reading glasses, sunglasses, bike gloves, keys, water bottles and more.

Un dernier lait au chocolat avant le retour

After a long week of cycling, there's nothing better than a chocolate milk to help you recover! Be sure to pick yours up at the finish!

Celebrate this week's achievements at the bistro

Six days of cycling in the heat, rain and even hail... that's something to celebrate! From 3:00 to 6:00 p.m., take advantage of the bistro and its musical ambience in Plantagenet to toast one last time with your fellow cyclists before heading home.

Want to relive the atmosphere of the Grand Tour for a day?

Join us on Saturday, September 7 in Bromont for the Vélo Mag Eastern Townships Challenge! On the program: road and gravel courses, lunch included and a ton of family faces! We also offer overnight accommodation packages. Check out the Vélo Québec Voyages website for more info.

THANK YOU!

In closing, the entire Vélo Québec Voyages team would like to thank you for your presence this week, for your passion and your constant smiles. We would also like to thank our volunteers and local resources, without whom an event like the Grand Tour would not be possible. See you all next year!



Services

Info booth and boutique

From 6 :30 to 10:00 a.m. - Papineauville
From 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. - Plantagenet

Mechanical booth

From 6:30 to 10:00 a.m. - Papineauville
From 2:00 to 6:00 p.m. - Plantagenet

First aid

From 7:00 to 10:00 a.m.- Papineauville
From 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. - Plantagenet



On the menu

Your breakfast - from 6:00 to 9:00 a.m.

- > French toast, hard-boiled egg, ham, cottage cheese, buckwheat pancake
- > Muffin, brioche, danish

Your meal at the lunch stop - from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

- > Bahn mi with shredded "Turlo" pork/tofu, kimchi cabbage and coriander
- > Classic Tabbouleh; couscous, tomatoes, chickpeas, cucumber and parsley
- > Victoria cheese curds
- > Cranberry and almond biscotti, fresh fruit



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